

Baltimore County Department of Aging, Maryland

The Baltimore County in Maryland actively promotes the *You Can Steps to Healthier Aging!* campaign as a way to highlight its healthy aging activities. This proactive county Department of Aging accomplishes this goal through specific activities planned by the BCDA and key partners. The program is innovative because it offers a multi-dimensional program that can be individualized for each participant and uses the expertise of a wide range of professionals and volunteers.

The *You Can!* logo appears on all Baltimore County senior center newsletters, Senior Nutrition Program and Health Promotion education materials. The department has distributed 8,000 Healthy Living Calendars with the *You Can!* logo to seniors. The organization also has mailed out 1,200 cards outlining the *You Can!* 10 Steps to Healthier Aging to seniors in the county.

The Baltimore County Department on Aging goes the distance by offering multiple opportunities for seniors to get involved. Among the County's many *You Can!* activities the BCDA offers new exercise classes such as Tai Chi, Yoga and Ballroom Dancing have been added to class offerings. It also offers fitness assessments and exercise plans at two (soon to be 5) senior center fitness centers. Seniors also can join health and nutrition education talks are presented monthly at 18 senior centers. Fall Prevention Clinics also have been offered at 18 senior centers, and participants with high risk for falls were given the option of further in-home assessments.

BCDA encourages senior participants to make wise food choices by offering events, information, and foods that promote healthy aging. Using new dietary guidelines, special meals and nutritional information are being offered at 18 senior centers and 28 senior housing complexes and nutrition sites reaching more than 3,300 seniors. Congregate meal menus have been redesigned to include more fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

The BCDA is proud of these many accomplishments. In the area of fitness, more than 300 senior center members are participating in two fitness centers that have trained staff and fitness equipment. A total of 220 seniors have participated in the Arthritis/PACE (People with Arthritis Can Exercise) educational presentations and 137 more participated in the fall prevention initiative.

Key partners have donated goods and services for the BDCA fitness initiative that includes the *You Can!* campaign approach and materials. Donations include marketing materials, exercise equipment, expertise in fitness center design and equipment selection. For example Key partners donated \$30,000 of fitness equipment.

BCDA was able to leverage funding and staff resources in a number of ways. Sponsors have underwritten cost of incentive items such as step counters. The County Department on Aging has expanded existing relationships with marketing initiatives. Professionals also have volunteered their time to act as presenters of health information and program

facilitators. BCDA staff have energetically assumed additional responsibilities to develop and implement *You Can!* projects to make this multitude of offerings possible.